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ABSTRACT

During the 1973-74 school year, Pacific Union College Elementary School used a new form which was much different from the form previously used to report pupil progress. About a week before the end of the school year a questionnaire of twenty questions was prepared to survey parental attitudes toward the new report forms. The survey revealed that the majority of parents (66%) preferred the old forms on stiff paper in which progress in each subject area was reported in the traditional A-B-C-D-F manner, in which separate grades for English, spelling, and handwriting were given, and in which citizenship was reported on a check list of behavior. Only 23% of the parents who replied favored the new form. In only one respect was there widespread approval (86%) of the new form; that was in the space provided for teacher comments. The survey also revealed that parents like to be consulted about the form in which their children's progress is reported. This was revealed both directly in the questionnaire when 74% of the parents indicated that both parents and teachers should decide on the type of report card used, and indirectly by the high percentage (85%) of replies from parents. (Author)

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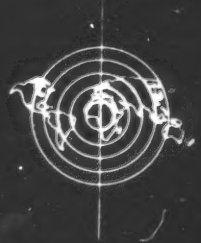

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SURVEY OF PARENT ATTITUDES TOWARD AN EXPERIMENTAL PUPIL PROGRESS REPORT

by

Lyndon Gerald Furst
Assistant Professor of
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1976

CENTER FOR STUDIES AND SERVICES IN EDUCATION
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SURVEY OF PARENT ATTITUDES TOWARD AN EXPERIMENTAL PUPIL PROGRESS REPORT

The Problem

Just prior to the opening of school for the 1973-1974 school year, Pacific Union College Elementary School located in Angwin, California, was notified that it had been selected to use a new experimental report card. After much discussion among the faculty this new method of reporting pupil progress was instituted. Since the report form for grades 4-6 represented such a radical change from the old report card, the faculty decided to hold a meeting with parents of the children in these grades to explain the new system and to answer questions. About twenty-five parents were present.

The principal gave a short explanation of the philosophy of the new system and of the procedures that would be employed by teachers when they assigned marks to students. Many parents asked questions and most indicated that they desired a chance to voice their opinions again after the new system had been used for a year.

In addition to meeting with parents, the principal met with the children in each grade to explain the new report cards. Children were given a chance to ask questions. Several exhibited resistance to the new procedure, but most were passive regarding the matter.

During the third marking period the superintendent's office sent a supply of questionnaires to the school to survey opinion regarding the

new report system. The questionnaires were given to the teachers and to several selected parents who were encouraged to return them to the superintendent's office. Many of the questions were of a very general nature and did not cover the basic differences between the new and old system. The faculty felt that a local survey that included all parents should be taken and should include specific questions dealing with the basic philosophy of the new report system. It was intended that the results would be used in deciding whether to continue the new system at Pacific Union College Elementary School, and also that they would be considered by the report card committee in making revisions on the experimental card.

Procedures

The questionnaire, which is included at the end of this report, was developed by the principal of Pacific Union College Elementary School. After the questions were formulated a copy was given to each teacher to read. They were asked to suggest revision of the wording and to propose additional questions which should be included. The result was a list of twenty questions dealing with the basic differences between the new and the old report system.

During the last week of school this questionnaire, along with a note of explanation, was given to each child in grades 4-8 to take home. Parents were not required to sign the questionnaire, but each teacher recorded which students returned them. Parents who had not returned the form were encouraged to do so.

Results

Eighty-six of the questionnaires were returned (or eighty-five percent). Several parents who had children in more than one grade returned

only one questionnaire, but had the opportunity to return one for each child. No record was kept of how many parents returned more than one form. The results of the survey are reported in appendix C.

On several of the questions parent responses favored the old system. Most preferred the stiff paper rather than light-weight paper and most parents preferred a check list of behavior rather than a single grade in citizenship. One of the basic changes in the new system was the use of numbers rather than letter grades and three marks (1,2,3) rather than five marks (A,B,C,D,F), as in the old system. On both of these items, parents overwhelmingly favored the old system.

Another basic difference was in the matter of reporting failure. In the new report system there was no mark to indicate that the child had done less than acceptable work and therefore failed. Eighty-seven percent of the parents felt it should be possible for a child to receive a failing grade in a subject and eighty-six percent indicated that a child should be able to repeat a grade if he fails two or more basic subjects. This would indicate that parents of children at Pacific Union College Elementary School do not favor a policy of automatically passing children to the next grade as is the policy in many schools.

The new report form for grades 7-8 combined the subjects of spelling, English, and handwriting into a single subject called "Communication Skills," and only one grade was given, which was an average of the three subjects. Eighty-eight percent of the parents preferred to have a separate mark for each of the three subjects; however, in many junior high school classrooms handwriting and spelling are not taught as separate subjects. The response to this question may indicate a desire on the part of parents for more emphasis on these two subjects in the upper grades.

On several items there seemed to be no clear majority opinion one way or the other. About the same number preferred one citizenship grade as those who preferred a citizenship grade in every class. However, there was quite a difference of opinion as to what should be the basis for assigning grades to students. While very few felt that grades should be based on comparison with other students, a large number indicated uncertainty as to what should be used as the basis for assigning grades.

On the question of the purpose for assigning grades, a slight majority indicated that reporting on a child's work was most important and twenty-three percent favored motivation as the main use of grades. A large majority felt that the old system was more successful than the new system in motivating children.

Another basic change was instituted in the report form for grades 4-6. Instead of assigning a grade for each subject, several subheadings were listed under each subject for which grades were assigned. For example, instead of a grade in mathematics a child received a grade in the following three areas: understands basic concepts, makes appropriate applications, demonstrates accuracy in computations. Forty-seven percent of the parents preferred this procedure but forty-nine percent preferred only one grade for each subject. It may be that the new procedure simply had not been used long enough to win support and would do so if continued for another year.

The new report forms did not have a space for a yearly average in each subject. Fifty-five percent of the respondents felt it was important to have a yearly average and forty-four percent felt that it was unimportant. There was also no place on the new form to indicate grade placement for the next year. Sixty percent of those who responded felt

this should be indicated and thirty-eight percent felt it was unimportant. Forty-one percent of the parents felt that the attendance section should indicate the number of days present while fifty-six percent said that this was not important. The old report form required the parent's signature and was returned to school, while the new report form did not require a parent's signature and was not returned to school. On this matter fifty-nine percent preferred the old card and thirty-one percent preferred the new.

Most elementary schools schedule formal parent-teacher conferences one or more times a year. The Northern California Conference Education Department has recommended for several years that these conferences take place at the end of the first and third marking periods, although many schools schedule formal conferences only at the end of the first period. Sixty-four percent of the parents indicated preference for formal meetings with the teacher twice a year, fifteen percent favored four times a year, and twelve percent favored once a year.

In only one area did parents indicate a definite preference for the new report forms. Eighty-six percent indicated satisfaction with the space provided for the teacher to make comments. On the old form no such space was provided.

The final item on the questionnaire was, "Do you prefer to continue with the new report system or use the old one?" Sixty-six percent of the parents were in favor of the old system, while twenty-three percent favored the new system. Ten percent were undecided as to which report system they favored. Clearly, after one year of use the new experimental system of reporting pupil progress had not gained wide acceptance at Pacific Union College Elementary School.

Limitations

In interpreting the results of the survey and drawing conclusions the following limitations should be considered:

1. The questionnaire was given only to parents of children in grades 4-8. Grades 1-3 were not included because the new report form for these grades was very similar to the old one.

2. This survey was limited to parents whose children were enrolled at Pacific Union College Elementary School at the end of the 1973-1974 school year.

3. There was no effort made to determine the reasons for answers that parents gave on the questionnaire although many did attach a note of explanation on certain items. These are included in appendix D.

4. There is a possibility that some questions may have been misunderstood by some parents who answered the questionnaire.

5. No attempt was made to determine differences in answers from parents with children in grades 4-6 and those with children in grades 7-8.

Conclusions

1. Parents of children attending Pacific Union College Elementary School preferred a system of reporting pupil progress which has the following characteristics:

   a. A form on stiff paper
   b. A check list of behavior rather than a single citizenship grade
   c. Marks indicated by letters
   d. Five marks possible
   e. The possibility that a child can receive a failing grade in a subject
   f. The possibility that a child can repeat a grade
   g. Space provided for teachers to write comments
   h. Separate grades in English, spelling, and handwriting

2. Parents had definite opinions regarding methods of reporting pupil progress and desired to have their opinions considered when the decision was made regarding what system was used.

3. The new experimental reporting system has not gained wide acceptance at Pacific Union College Elementary School.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the survey, the following recommendations are listed for consideration:

1. The questionnaire used in this survey should be used in other schools in the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to determine parent attitudes toward the basic differences between the new experimental reporting system and the old system.

2. The results of this survey should be considered when the new report form is revised.

3. If the new report form is to be continued at Pacific Union College Elementary School a strong educational program to win parental support should be undertaken prior to the beginning of the 1974-1975 school year.

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APPENDIX A

Dear Parents,

This year our school has used a new experimental form to report pupil progress. This form was quite different from the old card used in grades 4-8. I would like you to help evaluate the new system by answering the attached questions. You do not need to sign your name and you may write additional comments on the back. Please check only one answer. We are sending a questionnaire home with each child. Since the report form is different in grades 4-6 than 7 & 8, you may wish to fill out two questionnaires if you have more than one child in school. Thank you for your cooperation.

Jerry Furst
Principal, Elementary School

APPENDIX B

SURVEY OF PARENT ATTITUDES TOWARD NEW REPORT FORMS

Grades 4-8

_____
Child's grade in school

1. Do you prefer the report to be on stiff paper as the old card or the light weight paper as the new one?

   Old _____ New _____

2. Do you prefer one citizenship grade or a citizenship grade for every class?

   One Grade _____ Every Class _____

3. Do you prefer one citizenship grade or a checklist of behavior?

   One Grade _____ Check List _____

4. Do you prefer grades to be reported with numbers (1,2,3) or letters (A,B,C)?

   Numbers _____ Letters _____

5. Do you prefer grades to be reported with three marks (1,2,3) or five marks (A,B,C,D,F)?

   Three Marks _____ Five Marks _____

6. Do you feel that the grades reported should be based on a child's effort, performance, or comparison with other children?

   Effort _____ Performance _____
   Comparison with other children _____

7. Should grades be used primarily to motivate students or report on children's work?

   Motivate _____ Report _____

8. Which reporting system do you feel motivates children the most?

   Old System _____ New System _____

9. Should it be possible for a child to receive a failing grade in a subject?

   Yes _____ No _____

10. Should it be possible for a child to repeat a grade if he fails two or more basic subjects?

    Yes _____ No _____

11. Do you prefer one grade in language arts (communications skills) or a separate grade in English, Spelling, and handwriting?

One Grade _____ Separate Grades _____

12. Do you prefer one grade for each subject or a grade for each category under a subject?

One Grade _____ for each category _____

13. The old report card required a parent's signature and was returned to the school. With the new report the child takes it home and does not return it to school. Which do you prefer?

Old _____ New _____

14. Are you satisfied with the space provided on the new report for teachers to make comments?

Yes _____ No _____

15. Would you like to have a space for a yearly average in each subject on the report?

Yes _____ Don't Care _____

16. Should the report form have a space to indicate the grade placement for the next year?

Yes _____ Not important _____

17. Should the attendance section indicate the number of days present, as well as days absent and times tardy?

Yes _____ Not Important _____

18. How frequently should formal parent-teacher conferences be scheduled each year?

Once _____ Twice _____ Four Times _____

19. Who should make the decision on what type of report card is used?

Parents _____ Teachers _____ Both _____

20. Do you prefer to continue with the new report system or use the old one?

New _____ Old _____

APPENDIX C

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF PARENT ATTITUDES TOWARD NEW REPORT FORMS

	QUESTION	NUMBER	PER CENT
1.	Old	58	67
	New	18	21
	?	10	12
2.	One Grade	41	48
	Every Class	40	47
	?	5	6
3.	One Grade	19	22
	Check List	65	76
	?	2	2
4.	Numbers	11	13
	Letters	67	78
	?	8	9
5.	Three Marks	12	14
	Five Marks	70	81
	?	4	5
6.	Effort	21	24
	Performance	27	31
	Comparison with other Children	5	6
	?	33	38
7.	Motivate	20	23
	Report	51	59
	?	15	17
8.	Old System	61	71
	New System	14	16
	?	11	13
9.	Yes	75	87
	No	5	6
	?	6	7
10.	Yes	74	86
	No	4	5
	?	8	9
11.	One Grade	9	10
	Separate Grades	76	86
	?	1	1
12.	One Grade	42	49
	For each Category	40	47
	?	4	5

QUESTION		NUMBER	PER CENT
13.	Old	51	59
	New	27	31
	?	8	9
14.	Yes	74	86
	No	6	7
	?	6	7
15.	Yes	47	55
	Don't Care	38	44
	?	1	1
16.	Yes	52	60
	Not Important	33	38
	?	1	1
17.	Yes	35	41
	Not Important	48	56
	?	3	3
18.	Once	10	12
	Twice	55	64
	Four Times	13	15
	?	8	9
19.	Parents	3	3
	Teachers	16	19
	Both	64	74
	?	3	3
20.	New	20	23
	Old	57	66
	?	9	10

A ? indicates either no answer or more than one answer was marked.

APPENDIX D

PARENT COMMENTS ON RETURNED QUESTIONNAIRES

I. COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

1. The stiff paper was less messy looking. However, I do appreciate retaining a copy of the grades for "continual observation". Obviously the heavier paper is easier to work with for additional copies.

3. If there is a serious problem how about letting the parents know so they can work on it.

   A check list would give specific things whereas a grade doesn't tell much.

6. I believe, however, there should be a national average to judge their work by.

   "Comparison with other children" still includes actual "performance". A standard has to be maintained and the "comparison" should be with the general standard rather than twenty different standards being maintained for twenty different members of the class. Furthermore, the general standard should be based either nationally or for the <u>whole</u> school <u>Not</u> teacher by teacher.

7. I think they should report on the child's work but should also motivate.

   Grades never motivated any child.

   Grades can be utilized for both motivating a reporting. However, I strongly believe that the motivative factor lies in the rappart daily between teacher, parents, and child.

8. In our particular case I believe it is our constant awareness and live interest in our child's progress that is the most influential motivating factor.

9. Child should flunk a grade rather than social promote - also, teacher should consult with parents far in advance rather than wait until nothing can be done.

   If the child is not working up to par and you know he can, then he should get what he deserves.

10. I have no fear of the so called "psychological damage" to a child if he fails or repeats a year in school and if done kindly with all necessary explanations that it is for the child's own future benefit, the experience can be most beneficial

    Suggest summer make-up work. If a child is pushed ahead he will always be behind in his class.

He should only have to repeat the classes failed.

11. Good handwriting should be encouraged but not graded.

20. There's good and bad points to both.

With the new system it is very hard to tell if a child is making average grades or just passing. I prefer the old system to the new. I had a better idea of how my child was doing in school.

Don't want them to be too much work and complicated for the teachers. Do want to know how the child is progressing and where and when improvements are needed and I want to know soon enough to give the child needed assistance where needed.

It seems to me the grading system is the same only now you use 1,2,3 instead of A,B,C.

Don't want the report system to be too much work and complicated for the teachers. Do want to know how the child is progressing and where and when improvements are needed and soon enough to give the child needed assistance where possible to do so.

II. GENERAL COMMENTS

Parent-teacher conferences have usually been very frustrating to me. There seldom seems to be a desire on the part of the teacher to even care about the home factors of the child that influence his behavior or performance. I have felt that the conferences usually allow the teacher to tell me where my child is wrong and to try to excuse their inability to inspire my child to want to try. There are some beautiful, shining exceptions. I love them, mu child loves them, they love my child. May their tribe increase.

We really like the new report cards. I think it is important to know how the child does in every phase of each subject. We prefer to know more of our child;s efforts and performance rather than comparison to other children simply because the children sometimes make too much out of where they stand. A little bit of competition is all right but when children are trying for top grades merely because they want to get a better grade than someone else, rather than learn their lessons, I believe this does more harm than good. We should encourage them all to do their best rather than foster a spirit of competition.

There is no competitive program in the Seventh-day Adventist system, this is what motivates lower grade levels. Each child should be graded according to his ability and develop' character by accepting the responsibility of his achieved grade whether good or bad.

I do not like the new system of grading at all. First of all, you really don't know where your child is standing. Secondly, it seems to have taken away the enthusiasm the child had to see what grade he made. It is much too general. I very much believe there should be a national average to judge our children's progress by. This does not mean, however, that the slow child should still not have personal consideration. I believe even in the old system the teacher still considered ability along with achievement. I am convinced that this new system does not give us a true picture of our child's achievement or abilities. It does not give our children the incentive to try harder. I, for one, was not pleased with this years grading system, and would hope we would go back to the old system but perhaps improve it by breaking it down to more categories for grading.

The amount of time the teacher has to spend to make fifty plus evaluations on the present system must, in the natural order of life, be a most trying experience. With the exception of question# 11, I feel a single grade is adequate to report the child's actual performance and a checklist be used for all the other aspects. I do like the "breakdown" of areas idea. It gives me a better overview of my child's strong or weak areas and a point of departure when talking with the teacher without having to needle the teacher for where the problem lies exactly.

Pacific Union Conference
of
Seventh-day Adventists

PUPIL PROGRESS REPORT

Elementary Level
(4-6)

NAME _____ GRADE _____

SCHOOL _____ CONFERENCE _____

TEACHER _____ 19__ - 19__

The marks on this progress report are based on the student's performance and do not indicate his standing in the group. The level of progress is indicated by the following:

3 — COMMENDABLE PROGRESS . . . does more than required

2 — ADEQUATE PROGRESS . . . completes all assignments

1 — MINIMAL PROGRESS . . . works below capacity

BIBLE

	PERIOD 1	2	3	4
Has knowledge of content				
Memorizes various passages				
Participates in group activities				
Uses various resources, reference materials				
Applies concepts to problem solving				
Citizenship				

STUDENTS SELF-EVALUATION

I *willingly* read the Bible often				
I *apply* the Bible truths to my life				
I *tell* others of my acceptance of Jesus				
I *study* to learn Bible truths				

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Shows creative ability and imagination				
Oral expression				
Written expression				
Applies written mechanics				
Demonstrates ability in research processes				
Attempts to write legibly				
Shows mastery of basic spelling lists				
Shows spelling accuracy in daily writing				
Citizenship				

READING

Level				
Applies word skills				
Comprehends reading materials				
Masters vocabulary				
Reads well orally				
Practices dictionary skills				
Shows interest in library reading				
Citizenship				

FINE ARTS

	PERIOD 1	2	3	4
Music				
Participates in music activities				
Understands music fundamentals				
Demonstrates creative abilities				
Citizenship				
Art				
Participates in art activities				
Understands art fundamentals				
Demonstrates creative abilities				
Citizenship				

MATHEMATICS

Level				
Understands basic concepts				
Makes appropriate applications				
Demonstrates accuracy in computations				
Citizenship				

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Displays good sportsmanship				
Participates in activities				
Citizenship				

SCIENCE/HEALTH

Uses scientific procedures				
Participates in group activities				
Shows mastery of content				
Applies health principles				
Citizenship				

SOCIAL STUDIES

Applies an understanding of map skills				
Uses a variety of reference materials				
Participates in group activities				
Shows evidence of understanding concepts				
Citizenship				

ATTENDANCE REPORT

Days absent				
Tardinesses				

COMMENTS:

APPENDIX F

Pacific Union Conference
of
Seventh-day Adventists

PUPIL PROGRESS REPORT
Upper Grade Level
(7-8)

NAME _____ GRADE _____

SCHOOL _____ CONFERENCE _____

TEACHER _____ 19___ - 19___

TO PARENTS: This report is an account of your child's progress in acquiring skills and knowledge as well as developing sound relationships and work habits. It is only one means of informing you of the teacher's opinion of your child's growth. You are encouraged to visit our school at any time.

STANDARD TEST RESULTS

During the Parent-Teacher Conference the standardized test results will be reviewed.

PROGRESS LEGEND
3 – Commendable Progress
2 – Adequate Progress
1 – Minimal Progress

*Supplemented by Parent-Teacher-Student Conference

**Teacher may omit when using Continuous Progress Report

PROGRESS REPORT

Content Areas:	*1st Per.		2nd Per.		*3rd Per.		4th Per.	
	Learning	Behavior	Learning	Behavior	Learning	Behavior	Learning	Behavior
Art								
Bible								
Communication Skills								
**Mathematics								
Music								
Physical Education								
**Reading								
Science/Health								
Social Studies								
Vocational Skills								

CONTINUOUS PROGRESS REPORT

Content Areas:	Level	Behavior	Level	Behavior	Level	Behavior	Level	Behavior
Mathematics								
Reading								

ATTENDANCE RECORD

Days Absent				
Tardinesses				

COMMENTS: